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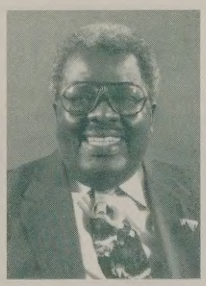
The Bureau of Land Management Service Center Newsletter September 1995

CENTER SCENE

Representatives from the National Hispanic Coalition met with the Bureau Director and other top-level managers recently to continue discussions on the Memorandum of Understanding signed in May 1994 between the Bureau and the Coalition. Shown left to right are Carolyn Burrel, Acting for Marilyn Johnson (who is the Acting AD for Human Resources); Larry Romero, Executive Vice President, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Ana Villagra, 1st Vice President, National Image, Inc.; Mike Dombeck, BLM Acting Director; Larry Bembry, Service Center Director; and Denise Meridith, BLM Deputy Director. Not shown is Laura Campos, Executive Director of MANA (a National Latina organization), who also attended the meeting.

Endings and Beginnings



This is one of my last opportunities to communicate with you as the Service Center Director, in this, the final issue of the *Center Scene*. The Service Center opened its doors for business 32 years ago, and the *Center Scene* staff published the first newsletter issue in December 1986. Now a couple of long-standing traditions are coming to an end.

However, this is also a beginning. Three new Centers are rising from the ashes of the old Service Center, and each can custom design its own newsletters and other communications tools for both internal and external audiences.

I'd like to leave you with a few thoughts close to my own heart. When I came here and first spoke with you at my swearing-in ceremony, I said that my job was to do whatever it took to assure the future of the Service Center's employees and programs.

It ended up a bit differently than I would have anticipated, as I ultimately found myself abolishing my own job. However, it was worth it to secure the future of our 300-plus employees and to raise the already high standard of customer service we have always provided.

A word of advice for the new Centers: avoid parochialism at all costs! If the three Centers are to have a viable future, they must communicate and collaborate and cooperate with one another.

Our fate is in our own hands, as individuals, as team members, and as Center employees. All of us have to seize the future, to anticipate change and move with it instead of resisting or ignoring it. Change is here to stay, whether we like it or not.

As for myself, I'll be staying around for awhile, sitting in my office doing special projects for the Director and Deputy Director. While I will have no official connection with the three new Centers, I look forward to seeing them grow and prosper.

My wife Carol's and my best wishes to each and every one of you. May the coming years be filled with success and happiness!

Long and Faithful Service!

Several individuals have worked at the Service Center virtually since day 1! John Greene and Paul Twist, both of whom work with the Branch of Mapping Sciences, reported for duty at the Service Center in September of 1965, almost 30 years ago to the day.

Other "old-timers" include Ed Dettman, Herman Weiss, and Virginia Coke, who arrived in 1966. There may be others who share in this honor . . . sorry if we missed mentioning you.

Lee Barkow (left) presents Al Amen with a certificate and an inscribed clock honoring Al's 40 years of government service. Al is a soil scientist with the National Applied Resource Sciences Center.

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The Service Center: A Brief History

Editor's Note: The following is summarized from paragraphs initially written by Ed Dettman for the BLM history book entitled Opportunity and Challenge: The Story of BLM.

Two service centers, one in Portland, Oregon, and one in Denver were established in 1963. They replaced Field Administrative Offices in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Portland. The centers were set up to achieve economies of scale through centralizing administrative and technical equipment and people, and to provide an effective setting for scarce skills that could be used jointly by field offices and BLM's Washington Office.

The fundamental structure of both centers was the same. However, the Denver center picked up financial processing because the Treasury Department had a major disbursing office here. Automated data processing also came to reside in Denver. In 1973, the Portland center's functions consolidated into the Denver Service Center.

Throughout its 32-year history, the Service Center has frequently changed and restructured itself to meet evolving customer needs. The Service Center concept, constantly adjusted to meet changing needs and priorities, proved to be an enduring and essential element in developing improved technical, administrative, and scientific support for public land management.

Managers Realigned

Mike Kirby, Acting Chief for the Division of Finance, has returned to the Division of Applied Resource Sciences. Mike will be transitioning into his new responsibilities as a Workflow Coordinator for the National Applied Resource Sciences Center.

The Division of Finance will be co-managed by Larry Bembry and Gary Grimstvedt. Larry will provide the administrative expertise, while Gary will supply the operational and subject matter perspective needed to understand technical issues. This arrangement will continue until the new National Business Center is up and running.

SC Hosts Two Distinguished Visitors

The Service Center hosted two top-level managers in August: Mat Millenbach and Sylvia Baca. Millenbach will be assuming the BLM Deputy Director role from Denise Meridith. Baca is the Department of the Interior's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management. Both individuals are in a position to support and provide work for the three new Centers.

Millenbach spent an hour at the Service Center on August 3 and heard presentations on all three Centers. Larry Bembry started things off by briefing Millenbach on the reinvention process that, over a period of 2 years, finally led to the creation of three new Centers.

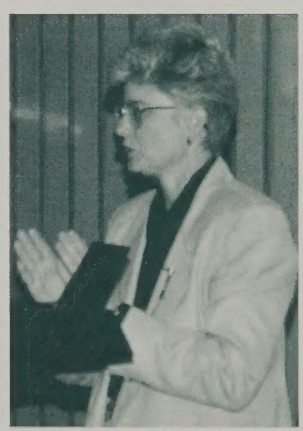
Amy Lueders and Ed Fritchie provided an overview of the developmental process that will lead soon to the creation of the Business Center. Linda Sedbrook and members of her staff talked about the core business functions of the new National Human Resources Management Center and highlighted what they will be providing in the future to the Bureau.

Rounding out the meeting, Lee Barkow introduced the National Applied Resource Sciences Center, explaining the new Center's role and organizational structure and noting the products and services to be offered. Mat observed, after hearing all of the presentations, that there is a lot to learn about the three new Centers and promised to come back at his earliest convenience to spend more time with us.

Sylvia Baca received a similar set of presentations on August 9 when she stopped by. Her 2 1/2 hours here allowed each Center to expand their presentations to 40 minutes, which allowed more time for questions and answers. Baca seemed impressed by the variety of scarce skills available here, and the fact that she could tap into them from the Assistant Secretary's office when necessary. Baca also expressed interest in coming back to learn more about the three Centers and how they can contribute to the Department's mission.

Both of these visits were pluses for the three Centers. Many senior managers in the Department are not fully aware of the variety and quality of services provided here at the Service Center. Anytime we get the opportunity to show a top-level manager what we are capable of doing, it helps all of us.

National Business Center in the Homestretch



The National Business Center is putting the finishing touches on the organization before opening its doors for business on October 1. The initial organization has been approved and a placement survey has been given to all employees, paving the way for assignments to home groups and permanent teams.

Nina Rose Hatfield, the Assistant Director (AD) for Business and Fiscal Services, traveled to Denver on August 16 to meet with employees. After describing the purpose of the placement survey, Nina went on to describe the role of the liaison.

The liaison position is like the hub of a wheel, with the National Business Center, the AD, the WO 800 team (Business and Fiscal Services), and Integration Team at the circumference. The liaison is to facilitate the AD working with the Center, ensure the overall objectives of the Bureau are met, and foster moving to a customer-focused organization.

At a potluck meal after the meeting, Nina had an opportunity to talk informally with Center employees and answer questions.

If all goes according to plan, Nina will assign all employees to home groups and permanent teams in early September and a telephone directory describing the work of the groups will be sent out toward the end of the month. Come October 1, the National Business Center will be up and running.

BLM Social Science Initiative Takes Off

by Jeff Zabler

Earlier this year, the BLM leadership asked Larry Bembry, SC Director; Joan Trent, Montana SO sociologist; and myself, as BLM's Chief Economist, to launch an effort to define what BLM managers need in order to build social science into decisionmaking. The goal is to empower managers to better serve customers.

As a preamble, BLM is consolidating its view of social science, blending economics, sociology, and political science together to break down disciplinary barriers and foster an integrated approach to solving problems and serving customers.

On July 26, BLM held the first of three manager-social scientist focus group meetings in Cody, Wyoming. The two other focus groups met in August in Las Vegas and Boise. Over 30 BLM employees from nine western states participated in the three meetings.

A frank and robust discussion focused on defining on-the-ground needs for social science, based on recent experiences with constituents. Approaches for meeting these needs also were explored.

Most needs for social science input were basic rather than complex and likely will be easier to address than first thought. The real challenge may be how BLM thinks about the new realities of serving the public that owns the lands for which BLM is steward.

The discussions highlighted a contradiction that typifies BLM's dilemma in improving its posture on "people issues." The managers emphasized the need for social science analysis and information to improve decisions and public service. However, they also said that if they were given added money/staffing, they felt the press of other work and priorities would *not* allow them to devote the additional resources to better using social science in their work.

The need for social science input may be more complex as issues are addressed higher in the BLM hierarchy. Resource Areas may benefit most from help in identifying and understanding community players and power brokers, their needs and issues, constituent conflicts, allies and antagonists, predispositions, and comfort levels. Everyone thought that social science must help monitor these, keeping management up to speed on such issues.

Districts had somewhat different interests; they wanted to see the big picture and how the pieces all fit together. They also voiced a need for support in working with constituents. They wanted to be armed with detailed information and analysis so they could more clearly present the facts to their publics and describe what BLM can do in addressing the issues.

All of the managers, who typically have natural science backgrounds, wanted help in asking the right questions when dealing with communities and stakeholders in general. There was broad agreement that training should integrate social science into *all* BLM work because it shows up in one way or another in everything. Managers realized that their academic and on-the-job preparation lacked a social science perspective and left them vulnerable.

Managers and social scientists not only felt they should work together but also stressed involvement at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid overlooking important socioeconomic concerns. Social scientists were seen foremost as solution brokers, identifying sources of analysis and information and then farming-out and managing the social science analysis for managers.

They also were seen as having to understand the manager's job, goals, time constraints, and frame of reference to be effective. Managers wanted social scientists to tailor information to exactly fit managers' present needs and to make information clear and believable for the manager.

Like doctors, social scientists must monitor managers' "social science well-being." It was strongly felt that working relationships would be the best teacher for both managers and social scientists. Having a good team process (identify issues, develop strategy, decide, and implement) was seen as the key to success.

Discussion highlighted the fact that there are enough social scientists, in and out of BLM, but most in BLM are not placed optimally in the organization. Social scientists are needed in the critical partner/advisor role with managers, reaching out to others to help craft options and solutions.

A major step in developing a network of social science contacts is the new universally accessible BLM Social Science Bulletin Board (call 303-236-0003 on your modem), developed by Tom Morris and myself and operated under the auspices of BLM's National Applied Resource Sciences Center (NARSC). As users add data, it will be a repository for information on social science research planned, underway, or completed and will highlight social science research needed. It will also serve as a directory of social scientists, regardless of affiliation, with expertise and interests in land management who can lend a helping hand.

Work in 1996 will include reporting on focus group findings and pulling everything together to make recommendations. As a follow-up, BLM also will develop social science training elements to incorporation in other training.

The BLM Social Science Bulletin Board will be refined to enhance user friendliness and, hopefully, to provide Internet access. BLM will publicize the bulletin board's availability as a tool to bring social scientists and managers together, as a means to identify and fill needs efficiently, and as a vehicle for strengthening partnerships and mutual understanding through social science.

NHRMC Adds New Staff and Capabilities

The National Human Resources Management Center is providing a home for two staffs: the National Safety Team and the former SC Division of IRM. The safety team and IRM staff will continue to serve customers as they always have. However, the new configuration will create opportunities to share expertise and get things done more efficiently.

For example, the IRM staff might be able to assist with some aspects of HRM and safety systems development, as well as helping to resolve some safety data management issues. And the current IRM Division Chief could be selected to serve as the alternate User Transition Team Representative for the Federal Personnel and Payroll System.

SC Property Management Leads the Way

by Lee Krebs

Property management isn't as cut and dried as people might think. As a matter of fact, there's plenty of room for innovation and creativity. Service Center and other BLM staff have been busy making life easier for both their customers and themselves.

BLM is implementing the Fixed Assets Subsystem, which is a subsidiary of the Federal Financial System (FFS), as the new Bureau property system. The first state (Utah) will come up this month and all states will be converted by the end of FY 96. BLM carried off this implementation in a little over 1 year, while the other two Interior bureaus now using it took more than 3 years to get the system going.

To simplify property management, BLM has also raised the accountable level, which is the level where items have to be tracked in the computer, to the capitalization level, which is $5,000. The only exceptions are a few select bureau or office sensitive items, such as computers and cellular phones. This has reduced the current automated personal property system from more than 125,000 items to just over 46,000.

As a result of its role in these innovative ventures, the Service Center is now is a position to offer its expertise to other bureaus that are considering implementing the Fixed Assets system.

Service Center staff have also developed a user-friendly bulletin board approach to disposing of excess property, which has been so successful that it has been adopted by the other bureaus in DOI. More than 175 users currently monitor the bulletin board. These include the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, BIA Tribes in New Mexico, universities all across the country; and most DOI bureaus, as well as other federal agencies and recipients. There are even a few public individuals who scan to see what is available and then follow-up with GSA in hopes of there being a public sale.

Four other DOI bureaus are currently reporting their available and excess property to us for inclusion on the bulletin board and subsequent reporting to GSA. In fact, BLM was the first agency outside of the Department of Defense to report electronically to GSA. In an average month, approximately 1,400 line items valued at more that $3.5 million are reported for DOI screening and about 1,000 items valued at $2.5 million are submitted to GSA.

During FY 94, BLM saved more than $6.3 million on equipment acquired from other agencies' excess inventories, including computers, office furniture and equipment, and miscellaneous electronic items. The Bureau also obtained over $1.5 million in proceeds from exchange/sale items.

CFC Campaign: Caring Neighbors Working Together

When we were young, we learned the value of teamwork. We learned that by working with others, we could do much more—and in less time—than we could do on our own.

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) offers a classic example of just how powerful teamwork can be. Through a vast network of volunteers and donors, CFC funds a wide range of services for people who really need them. These services address some serious problems our Nation is confronting—illiteracy, AIDS, teen pregnancy, homelessness, childcare, substance abuse, and programs for disabled, abused, and elderly individuals. Indeed, many of the health and human-care services Metropolitan Denver has come to rely on are there because people work together through the CFC.

The CFC is a story of hope . . . and help . . . working together. And, as a CFC contributor, you can help this story continue.

Each of us plays an important role in the success of the Centers' CFC campaign. Once again, we ask that you join in supporting our team effort for CFC. October 2, 1995, marks the beginning date of our 2-week 1995 Combined Federal Campaign.

The theme for CFC this year is *"FEDERAL EMPLOYEES: public servants . . . caring neighbors."* Please help us continue this tradition in 1995. It's a great opportunity to keep our community strong and healthy.

The CFC is holding an agency fair at the Bureau of Reclamation (Bldg. 67) from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on September 14, 1995. You need to make arrangements with your supervisor before attending, but please attend if you can.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer your time to help during the campaign, contact Steven Shafran, CFC Chairman, at 236-6694.

Personnel News

New Employees

Carolyn Robinson-Ware, EEO Manager, SC-633
Rory Raschen, Physical Scientist, SC-214

Separations

Dondi Sutton, Voucher Examiner, SC-616
Anna Chetlain, Library Aid, SC-653
Glenda Wilson, Financial Mgmt. Spec., DW-101
Barbara Smith, Voucher Examiner, SC-616
Barbara Walters, Systems Analyst, SC-613

Employee Awards

SC and DW employees recently approved for awards

Performance Awards

Karl Smith DW-110
Gary Slagel DW-111

Special Act Awards

Jennifer Johnson DW-100
Gary Slagel DW-111
Theodore Zeisig DW-111
Carolyn Abeyta DW-111
Linda Hill SC-211
Jason Swegle SC-215
Neffra Matthews SC-215
Marilyn Hutchison SC-216
Richard Santos SC-510
Jim Ross SC-510
Eva Thomas SC-610